It's a Wonderful Life

It's a Wonderful Life is a 1946 American Christmas fantasy drama film produced and directed by Frank Capra, based on the short story and booklet *The Greatest Gift*, which Philip Van Doren Stern wrote in 1939 and published privately in 1943.[4] The film is one of the most beloved in American cinema, and has become traditional viewing during the Christmas season.

The film stars James Stewart as George Bailey, a man who has given up his dreams in order to help others, and whose imminent suicide on Christmas Eve brings about the intervention of his guardian angel, Clarence Odbody (Henry Travers). Clarence shows George all the lives he has touched, and how different life in his community of Bedford Falls would be if he had never been born.

Despite performing poorly at the box office due to stiff competition at the time of its release, the film has become a classic and is a staple of Christmas television around the world.[5]

Theatrically, the film's break-even point was $6.3 million, approximately twice the production cost, a figure it didn't come close to achieving on its initial release. An appraisal in 2006 reported: "Although it was not the complete box office failure that today everyone believes ... it was initially a major disappointment and confirmed, at least to the studios, that Capra was no longer capable of turning out the populist features that made his films the must-see, money-making events they once were.[6]

It's a Wonderful Life is now considered one of the greatest films of all time. It was nominated for five Academy Awards, including Best Picture, and has been recognized by the American Film Institute as one of the 100 best American films ever made,[4] as number 11 on its initial 1998 greatest movie list, as number 20 on its revised 2007 greatest movie list, and as number one on its list of the most inspirational American films of all time.[7] Capra revealed that it was his personal favorite among the films he directed and that he screened it for his family every Christmas season.[8]

Contents

Plot

Cast

Production
- Background
- Casting
- Filming

Reception
- Critical response

Awards and honors

Release

It's a Wonderful Life

LIBERTY FILMS INC.
Frank CAPRA'S
IT'S A WONDERFUL LIFE
James STEWART
and Donna REED
LIONEL BARRYMORE · THOMAS MITCHELL · HENRY TRAVERS
BEULAH BONDI · WARD BOND · FRANK FAYLEN · GLORIA GRAHAME
FRANK CAPRA

Theatrical release poster

Directed by	Frank Capra
Produced by	Frank Capra
Screenplay by	Frances Goodrich Albert Hackett Frank Capra
Based on	"The Greatest Gift' by Philip Van Doren Stern
Starring	James Stewart Donna Reed Lionel Barrymore Thomas Mitchell Henry Travers Beulah Bondi Ward Bond Frank Faylen Gloria Grahame
Music by	Dimitri Tiomkin
Cinematography	Joseph Walker Joseph Biroc
Edited by	William Hornbeck

Ownership and copyright issues
Colorization
Home release
Adaptations in other media
Remakes
Sequel
Potential
Urban legend
See also
References
Citations
Bibliography
Further reading
External links

Production company	Liberty Films
Distributed by	RKO Radio Pictures
Release date	December 20, 1946
Running time	135 minutes
Country	United States[1]
Language	English
Budget	$3.18 million[N 1]
Box office	$3.3 million[3]

Plot

On Christmas Eve 1945, in Bedford Falls, New York, George Bailey contemplates suicide. The prayers of his family and friends reach heaven, where Clarence Odbody, Angel 2nd class, is assigned to save George, in return for which he will earn his angel wings. To prepare him for his mission, Clarence is shown flashbacks of George's life. The first is from 1919, when 12-year-old George saves his younger brother Harry from drowning in a frozen lake; George loses his hearing in one ear as a result. At his after-school job, George realizes that the druggist, Mr. Gower, distraught over his son's death from flu, has accidentally added poison to a child's prescription, and intervenes to stop him from causing harm.

In 1928, George plans to leave on a world tour and then attend college. At Harry's high-school graduation party, George is reintroduced to Mary Hatch, who has had a crush on him from childhood. Their walk home is interrupted by news that George's father, Peter, has died of a stroke. George postpones his travel so he can sort out the family business, Bailey Brothers' Building and Loan. Henry F. Potter, the richest and meanest man in town, wishes to dissolve the Building and Loan to eliminate it as a competitor. The board of directors votes to keep the Building and Loan open, on condition that George stay to run it (along with his absent-minded uncle Billy). George gives his college tuition to Harry on the condition that Harry take over the Building and Loan when he graduates.

Four years later, in 1932, Harry returns from college married and with a job offer from his father-in-law. Although Harry is ready to honor his commitments to George and the Building and Loan, George learns that the job has excellent prospects and won't allow his brother to turn it down. As a result, George never does leave Bedford Falls but ends up falling in love with Mary and they marry. But on their way to their honeymoon, they witness a run on the bank and use their $2,000 honeymoon savings (equivalent to $39,000 in 2018[9]) to keep the Building and Loan solvent and out of Potter's control until the panic subsides.

Eventually, George establishes Bailey Park, a development of modest houses financed by the Building and Loan that offers home ownership in contrast to rentals in Potter's overpriced slums. The unscrupulous Potter attempts to lure George into becoming his assistant, offering him $20,000 a year (equivalent to $280,000 in 2018[9]); George is momentarily tempted, but realizes Potter's true intent is to shut down the Building and Loan, and rebukes him.

During World War II, George is ineligible for service because of his deaf ear. Harry becomes a Navy pilot and earns the Medal of Honor by shooting down a kamikaze plane headed for a troop transport. On Christmas Eve morning 1945, as the town prepares a hero's welcome for Harry, Uncle Billy goes to the bank to deposit $8,000 (equivalent to $110,000 in 2018[9]) of the Building and Loan's cash. When Potter enters, Billy taunts him by grabbing the newspaper out of his lap and reading the headline about Harry aloud. Billy returns the newspaper to Potter, but unintentionally wraps the envelope with the cash in it. When the teller asks him for the money for the deposit, Billy discovers that he has misplaced the cash. Potter discovers the envelope and, seeing an opportunity to

ruin the Baileys and finally quash the Building and Loan, says nothing. When a bank examiner arrives to review the Building and Loan's records, George realizes that scandal and criminal charges will follow. After retracing Billy's steps without success, George berates him, then goes home and takes out his frustration on his family

George with his "cute and cloying" guardian angel Clarence (Henry Travers)[10]

George desperately appeals to Potter for a loan and offers his life insurance policy with only $500 in equity (equivalent to $10,000 in 2018[9]) as collateral. Based on the policy's $15,000 nominal value, Potter says that George is worth more dead than alive and phones the police to have him arrested. George gets drunk at a local bar and prays for help, then, contemplating suicide, goes to a nearby bridge. The film's narrative catches up to the time of the opening scene. Before George can jump, Clarence dives into the river, causing George to rescue Clarence rather than kill himself. George does not believe Clarence's subsequent claim that he is George's guardian angel.

When George says he wishes he had never been born, Clarence decides to grant his wish and show George an alternate timeline in which he never existed. Bedford Falls is named Pottersville and is dark and corrupt. Mr. Gower, the druggist, has recently been released from prison for manslaughter, because George was not there to stop him from putting poison in the pills. The Building and Loan has long since closed down, as George never took over after his father's passing. George's mother does not know him; she reveals that Uncle Billy was institutionalized after the Building and Loan failed. In the cemetery where Bailey Park would have been, George discovers Harry's grave; Clarence explains that the soldiers on the transport ship died because Harry was not there to save them, since George was not alive to save Harry from drowning. When George seeks out Mary, who never married, and claims he is her husband, she screams for the police. George flees and the local policeman gives chase.

Now convinced that Clarence is really his guardian angel, George runs to the bridge and begs for his life back; the alternate timeline changes back to the original reality. George rushes home to await his arrest. Mary and Uncle Billy arrive, having rallied the townspeople, who stream in and donate more than enough to cover the missing $8,000. Harry arrives and toasts George as "the richest man in town". A bell on the Christmas tree rings, and the youngest daughter, Zuzu, says that the sound means that an angel has just earned his wings, signifying Clarence's promotion.

Cast

Credited cast

- James Stewart as George Bailey
  - Bobby Anderson as Little George Bailey
- Donna Reed as Mary Hatch Bailey
  - Jean Gale as Little Mary Hatch
- Henry Travers as Clarence Odbody
- Lionel Barrymore as Mr. Henry F. Potter
- Thomas Mitchell as Uncle Billy Bailey
- Beulah Bondi as Ma Bailey
- Frank Faylen as Ernie Bishop, the cab driver
- Ward Bond as Bert, the cop
- Gloria Grahame as Violet Bick
- William Edmunds as Mr. Giuseppe Martini
- Argentina Brunetti as Mrs. Martini
- Sheldon Leonard as Nick, the bartender
- Frank Hagney as Potter's wheelchair pusher
- Ray Walker as Joe, luggage salesman
- Charles Lane as Potter's rent collector
- Larry Simms as Pete Bailey
- Carol Coomes (AKA Carol Coombs) as Janie Bailey
- Jimmy Hawkins as Tommy Bailey
- Karolyn Grimes as Zuzu Bailey

Uncredited cast

- Charles Halton as Mr. Carter, bank examiner
- J. Farrell MacDonald as Man whose tree George drives into
- Harry Holman as Mr. Partridge, High School principal

    - Jeanine Ann Roose[11] as Little Violet Bick
- H. B. Warner as Mr. Emil Gower
- Todd Karns as Harry Bailey
    - George Nokes as Little Harry Bailey
- Samuel S. Hinds as father Peter "Pop" Bailey
- Lillian Randolph as Annie, maid
- Frank Albertson as Sam Wainwright
    - Ronnie Ralph as Little Sam Wainwright
- Virginia Patton as Ruth Dakin Bailey, Harry's wife
- Mary Treen as Cousin Tilly, employee
- Charles Williams as Cousin Eustace, employee
- Sarah Edwards as Mrs. Hatch, Mary's mother
- Carl "Alfalfa" Switzer as Freddie (Mary's annoying high school suitor)
- Mark Roberts as Mickey (student with the key to open up pool)
- Max Wagner as Cashier/Bouncer at Nick's Bar
- Dick Elliott as fat man on porch
- Tom Fadden as Bridge Caretaker
- Stanley Andrews as Mr. Welch, teacher's husband
- Al Bridge as Sheriff with arrest warrant
- Ellen Corby as Miss Davis
- Marian Carr as Jane Wainwright, Sam's wife[12]
- Joseph Granby as Angel Joseph (voice)
- Moroni Olsen as the Senior Angel (voice)

Production

George Bailey (James Stewart), Mary Bailey (Donna Reed), and their youngest daughter Zuzu (Karolyn Grimes).

Background

The original story, "The Greatest Gift", was written by Philip Van Doren Stern in November 1939. After it was rejected by several publishers, he had it printed as a 24-page pamphlet and mailed to 200 family members and friends for Christmas 1943.[13][N 2][15] The story came to the attention of either Cary Grant or RKO producer David Hempstead, who showed it to Grant's agent. In April 1944, RKO Pictures bought the rights to the story for $10,000, hoping to turn it into a vehicle for Grant.[16] Dalton Trumbo, Clifford Odets and Marc Connelly each worked on versions of the screenplay before the RKO shelved the project. In Trumbo's draft, George Bailey is an idealistic politician that slowly grows more cynical as the story progresses, then tries to commit suicide after losing an election. The angel shows him Bedford Falls not as it would be if he had never been born, but if he had gone into business instead of politics.[17] Grant went on to make another Christmas movie staple, *The Bishop's Wife*.[N 3][19]

RKO studio chief Charles Koerner urged Frank Capra to read "The Greatest Gift." Capra's new production company, Liberty Films, had a nine-film distribution agreement with RKO. Capra immediately saw its potential, and wanted it for his first Hollywood film after making documentaries and training films during the war. RKO sold him the rights for $10,000 and threw in the three earlier scripts for free. (Capra claimed the rights and the scripts cost him $50,000.)[N 4] [13] Capra salvaged a few scenes from Odets' earlier screenplay[21] and worked with writers Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett, Jo Swerling, Michael Wilson, and Dorothy Parker (brought in to "polish" the script),[22] on many drafts of the screenplay

It was not a harmonious collaboration. Goodrich called Capra "that horrid man" and recalled, "He couldn't wait to get writing it himself." Her husband, Albert Hackett, said, "We told him what we were going to do, and he said 'That sounds fine.' We were trying to move the story along and work it out, and then somebody told us that [Capra] and Jo Swerling were working on it together, and that sort of took the guts out of it. Jo Swerling was a very close friend of ours, and when we heard he was doing this we felt rather

bad about it. We were getting near the end and word came that Capra wanted to know how soon we'd be finished. So my wife said, 'We're finished right now.' We quickly wrote out the last scene and we never saw him again after that. He's a very arrogant son of a bitch."[23]

Director Frank Capra

Later, a dispute ensued over the writing credits. Capra said, "The Screen Writers' Arbitration committee decided that Hackett and Goodrich, a married writing team, and I should get the credit for the writing. Jo Swerling hasn't talked to me since. That was five years ago."[24] The final screenplay, renamed by Capra *It's a Wonderful Life*,[13][25] was credited to Goodrich, Hackett, and Capra, with "additional scenes" by Jo Swerling.

Seneca Falls, New York, claims that Frank Capra was inspired to model Bedford Falls after the town after a visit in 1945. The town has an annual "It's a Wonderful Life Festival" in December.[26] In mid-2009, The Hotel Clarence opened in Seneca Falls, named for George Bailey's guardian angel. On December 10, 2010, the "It's a Wonderful Life" Museum opened in Seneca Falls, with Karolyn Grimes, who played Zuzu in the movie, cutting the ribbon.[27] However, film historian Jeanine Basinger, curator of the Frank Capra archives at Wesleyan University and author of "The *It's A Wonderful Life* Book," has said there is no evidence for Seneca Falls' claim. "I have been through every piece of paper in Frank Capra's diaries, his archives, everything. There's no evidence of any sort whatsoever to support this. That doesn't mean it isn't true. But no one is ever going to prove it." Basinger said that Capra always described Bedford Falls as an "Everytown."[28]

Philip Van Doren Stern said in a 1946 interview, "Incidentally, the movie takes place in Westchester County. Actually, the town I had in mind was Califon, N.J." The historic iron bridge in Califon is similar to the bridge that George Bailey considered jumping from in the movie.[29]

Both James Stewart (from Indiana, Pennsylvania) and Donna Reed (from Denison, Iowa) came from small towns. Stewart's father ran a small hardware store where James worked for years. Reed demonstrated her rural roots by winning an impromptu bet with Lionel Barrymore when he challenged her to milk a cow on set.[30]

Casting

Ending scene of the film

In his autobiography, Capra recalled, "Of all actors' roles I believe the most difficult is the role of a Good Sam who doesn't know that he is a Good Sam. I knew one man who could play it ... James Stewart. ... I spoke to Lew Wasserman, the MCA agent who handled Jimmy, told him I wanted to tell Jimmy the story. Wasserman said Stewart would gladly play the part without hearing the story."[31] Stewart and Capra had previously collaborated on *You Can't Take It with You* (1938) and *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* (1939).

Henry Fonda, arguably Stewart's best friend, was also considered.[32][33] Both actors had returned from the war with no employment prospects. Fonda, however, was cast in John Ford's *My Darling Clementine* (1946), which was filmed at the same time that Capra shot *It's a Wonderful Life*.

Jean Arthur, Stewart's co-star in *You Can't Take It With You* and *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*, was first offered the role of Mary, but had a prior commitment on Broadway. Capra next considered Olivia de Havilland, Martha Scott, Ann Dvorak, and Ginger Rogers before Donna Reed won the part. Rogers turned it down because she considered it "too bland". In Chapter 26 of her autobiography *Ginger: My Story*, she questioned her decision by asking her readers: "Foolish, you say?"

A long list of actors were considered for the role of Potter (originally named Herbert Potter): Edward Arnold, Charles Bickford, Edgar Buchanan, Louis Calhern, Victor Jory, Raymond Massey, Vincent Price, and even Thomas Mitchell.[33] However, Lionel Barrymore, who eventually won the role, was a famous Ebenezer Scrooge in radio dramatizations of *A Christmas Carol* at the time, and was a natural choice for the role. Barrymore had also worked with Capra and Stewart on his 1938 Best Picture Oscar winner, *You Can't Take It with You*.

H.B. Warner, who was cast as the drugstore owner Mr. Gower, actually studied medicine before going into acting. He was also in some of Capra's other films, including *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town*, *Lost Horizon*, *You Can't Take It with You*, and *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*.[34] In the silent era, he had played the role of Jesus Christ in Cecil B. DeMille's *The King of Kings* (1927). The name Gower came from Capra's employer Columbia Pictures, which had been located on Gower Street for many years. Also on Gower Street was a drugstore that was a favorite for the studio's employees.[35]

Charles Williams, who was cast as Eustace Bailey, and Mary Treen, who was cast as Matilda "Tilly" Bailey, were both B-list actors, as they both had appeared in 90 films each before filming *It's a Wonderful Life*.[36]

Jimmy the raven (Uncle Billy's pet) appeared in *You Can't Take It with You* and each subsequent Capra film.[32][37]

Filming

It's a Wonderful Life was shot at RKO Radio Pictures Studios in Culver City, California, and the 89-acre RKO movie ranch in Encino,[39] where "Bedford Falls" was adapted from Oscar-winning sets originally designed by art director Max Ree for the 1931 epic film *Cimarron*. Covering 4 acres (1.6 ha), the town consisted of a main street stretching 300 yards (three city blocks) with 75 stores and buildings, and a residential neighborhood.[40] Capra added a tree-lined center parkway, built a working bank set, and planted 20 full-grown oak trees.[41] Pigeons, cats, and dogs were allowed to roam the mammoth set to give the "town" a lived-in feel.[37]

James Stewart and Gloria Grahame as George Bailey and Violet Bick: "The compassion of Jesus for Mary Magdalene."[38]

Due to the requirements of filming in an "alternate reality" as well as different seasons, the exterior set was extremely adaptable. RKO studio's head of special effects, Russell Shearman, developed a new compound utilizing water, soap flakes, foamite and sugar to create "chemical snow" for the film. Before then, movie snow was usually made from untoasted cornflakes, which were so loud when stepped on that dialogue had to be re-dubbed afterwards.[42] [43]

Filming started on April 15, 1946, and wrapped on July 27, 1946, exactly on deadline for the 90-day principal photography schedule.[18]

There are only two surviving locations from the film. The first is the swimming pool that was unveiled during the high school dance sequence. It is located in the gymnasium at Beverly Hills High School and is still in use as of 2013. The second is the "Martini home" in La Cañada Flintridge, California.[44] RKO's movie ranch in Encino was razed in 1954.[N 5]

The scene where young George saves his brother Harry from drowning was different in an early draft of the script. The boys play ice hockey on the river (which is on Potter's property) as Potter watches with disdain. George shoots the puck, but it goes astray and breaks the "No Trespassing" sign and lands in Potter's yard. Potter becomes irate and the gardener releases the attack dogs, which cause the boys to flee. Harry falls in the ice and George saves him with the same results.[46]

In another draft, after he unsuccessfully attempts to consult his father about his drugstore dilemma, George considers asking Uncle Billy, but Billy is on the phone with the bank examiner. Billy lights his cigar and throws his match in the wastebasket. George turns to Tilly (who, along with Eustace, are his cousins, although not Billy's kids), but she is on the phone with her friend, Martha. She says, "Potter's here, the bank examiner's coming. It's a day of judgement." The wastebasket suddenly catches fire and Billy cries for help. Tilly runs in and puts the fire out with a pot of coffee. George decides to deal with the situation by himself.[47]

According to Bobby Anderson, in the confrontation between Mr. Gower and young George, H.B. Warner slapped him for real and made his ear bleed, reducing him to tears. Warner hugged him after the scene was shot.[48]

Composer Dimitri Tiomkin had written "Death Telegram" and "Gower's Deliverance" for the drugstore sequence, but Capra elected to forgo music in those scenes. Tiomkin had worked on many of Capra's previous films, but those changes, and others, led to a falling out between the two men. Tiomkin felt as though his work was being seen as a mere suggestion. In his autobiography *Please Don't Hate Me*, he said of the incident, "an all around scissors job".[47]

Young George (Bobby Anderson) with Violet and Mary in Mr. Gower's drugstore

In the scene where Uncle Billy gets drunk at Harry and Ruth's welcome home/newlyweds' party and staggers away off camera, a crash is heard off screen. Uncle Billy yells, "I'm all right! I'm all right!" Thomas Mitchell had actually knocked over some equipment; Capra left in his impromptu ad lib and augmented the noise with additional sound effects.

According to rare stills that have been unearthed, several sequences were filmed but subsequently cut.[49] Alternative endings were also considered. Capra's first script had Bailey fall to his knees to recite "The Lord's Prayer" (the script also called for an opening scene with the townspeople in prayer). Feeling that an overly religious tone undermined the emotional impact of the family and friends rushing to George's rescue, the closing scenes were rewritten.[50][51][52]

Capra found the film's original cinematographer Victor Milner slow and pretentious, and hired Joseph Walker. When Harry Cohn demanded that Walker return to Columbia Pictures to shoot a film for one of the studio's female stars, Walker trained Joseph Biroc to be his replacement. Although working with three cinematographers was difficult for Capra, it turned out very well in Walker's opinion because the scenes each cinematographer shot were so different that they didn't have to match each other's visual styles.[53]

Reception

Critical response

According to a 2006 book, "A spate of movies appeared just after the ending of the Second World War, including *It's a Wonderful Life* (1946) and *Stairway to Heaven* (1946), perhaps tapping into so many people's experience of loss of loved ones and offering a kind of consolation."[54] *It's a Wonderful Life* premiered at the Globe Theatre in New York on December 20, 1946, to mixed reviews.[18] While Capra thought the contemporary critical reviews were either universally negative, or at best dismissive,[55] *Time* said, "*It's a Wonderful Life* is a pretty wonderful movie. It has only one formidable rival (Goldwyn's *The Best Years of Our Lives*) as Hollywood's best picture of the year. Director Capra's inventiveness, humor, and affection for human beings keep it glowing with life and excitement."[56]

George and Mary dancing near the opening in the floor in the high school gym

Bosley Crowther, writing for *The New York Times*, complimented some of the actors, including Stewart and Reed, but concluded that "the weakness of this picture, from this reviewer's point of view, is the sentimentality of it—its illusory concept of life. Mr. Capra's nice people are charming, his small town is a quite beguiling place and his pattern for solving problems is most optimistic and facile. But somehow, they all resemble theatrical attitudes, rather than average realities."[57]

The film, which went into general release on January 7, 1947, placed 26th ($3.3 million) in box office revenues for 1947[3] (out of more than 400 features released),[58] one place ahead of another Christmas film, *Miracle on 34th Street*. The film was supposed to be released in January 1947, but was moved up to December 1946 to make it eligible for the 1946 Academy Awards. This move was

seen as worse for the film, as 1947 did not have quite the stiff competition as 1946. If it had entered the 1947 Awards, its biggest competition would have been *Miracle on 34th Street.* The number one grossing movie of 1947, *The Best Years of Our Lives*, made $11.5 million.[3]

The film recorded a loss of $525,000 at the box office for RKO.[59]

On May 26, 1947, the FBI issued a memo stating, "With regard to the picture 'It's a Wonderful Life', [redacted] stated in substance that the film represented rather obvious attempts to discredit bankers by casting Lionel Barrymore as a 'scrooge-type' so that he would be the most hated man in the picture. This, according to these sources, is a common trick used by Communists. [In] addition, [redacted] stated that, in his opinion, this picture deliberately maligned the upper class, attempting to show the people who had money were mean and despicable characters."[60] Film historian Andrew Sarris points out as "curious" that "the censors never noticed that the villainous Mr Potter gets away with robbery without being caught or punished in any way".[10]

In 1990, *It's a Wonderful Life* was deemed "culturally, historically, or aesthetically significant" by the United States Library of Congress and selected for preservation in their National Film Registry.[61]

In 2002, Britain's Channel 4 ranked *It's a Wonderful Life* as the seventh greatest film ever made in its poll "The 100 Greatest Films".[62]

In June 2008, AFI revealed its *10 Top 10*, the best ten films in ten "classic" American film genres, after polling over 1,500 people from the creative community. *It's a Wonderful Life* was acknowledged as the third-best film in the fantasy genre.[63][64]

Henry Potter (Lionel Barrymore) was placed in AFI's 100 Years ... 100 Heroes & Villains as No. 6 of villains, while George Bailey was voted No. 9 of heroes.

Somewhat more iconoclastic views of the film and its content are occasionally expressed. In his review for *The New Republic* in 1947, film critic Manny Farber wrote, "To make his points [Capra] always takes an easy, simple-minded path that doesn't give much credit to the intelligence of the audience", and adds that there are only a "few unsentimental moments here and there".[65][N 6] Wendell Jamieson, in a 2008 article for *The New York Times* which was generally positive in its analysis of the film, noted that far from being simply a sweet sentimental story, it "is a terrifying, asphyxiating story about growing up and relinquishing your dreams, of seeing your father driven to the grave before his time, of living among bitter, small-minded people. It is a story of being trapped, of compromising, of watching others move ahead and away, of becoming so filled with rage that you verbally abuse your children, their teacher, and your oppressively perfect wife."[66]

> ... one of the most profoundly pessimistic tales of human existence ever to achieve a lasting popularity.
>
> —Film historian Andrew Sarris in *"You Ain't Heard Nothin' Yet.": The American Talking Film History & Memory 1927-1949*.[10]

In a 2010 essay for *Salon*, Richard Cohen described *It's a Wonderful Life* as "the most terrifying Hollywood film ever made". In the "Pottersville" sequence, he wrote, George Bailey is not seeing the world that would exist had he never been born, but rather "the world as it does exist, in his time and also in our own".[67] Nine years earlier, another *Salon* writer, Gary Kamiya, had expressed the opposing view that "Pottersville *rocks!*", adding: "The gauzy, Currier-and-Ives veil Capra drapes over Bedford Falls has prevented viewers from grasping what a tiresome and, frankly, toxic environment it is ... We all live in Pottersville now".[68]

The film's elevation to the status of a beloved classic came three decades after its initial release, when it became a television staple during Christmas season in 1976.[69] This came as a welcome surprise to Frank Capra and others involved with its production. "It's the damnedest thing I've ever seen", Capra told *The Wall Street Journal* in 1984. "The film has a life of its own now, and I can look at it like I had nothing to do with it. I'm like a parent whose kid grows up to be president. I'm proud ... but it's the kid who did the work. I didn't even think of it as a Christmas story when I first ran across it. I just liked the idea."[70] In a 1946 interview, Capra described

the film's theme as "the individual's belief in himself" and that he made it "to combat a modern trend toward atheism".[70] It ranked 283rd among critics, and 107th among directors, in the 2012 *Sight & Sound* polls of the greatest films ever made.[71]

The film's positive reception has continued into the present. On review aggregator Rotten Tomatoes, the film holds an approval rating of 94% based on 71 reviews, with an average rating of 8.9/10. The website's critical consensus reads, "The holiday classic to define all holiday classics, *It's a Wonderful Life* is one of a handful of films worth an annual viewing."[72] On Metacritic, which assigns a normalized rating to reviews, the film has a score 89 out of 100, based on 17 critics, indicating "universal acclaim".[73]

Mary Hatch (Donna Reed), spinster librarian, in the world where George Bailey was never born.

Awards and honors

Prior to the Los Angeles release of *It's a Wonderful Life*, Liberty Films mounted an extensive promotional campaign that included a daily advertisement highlighting one of the film's players, along with comments from reviewers. Jimmy Starr wrote, "If I were an Oscar, I'd elope with *It's a Wonderful Life* lock, stock and barrel on the night of the Academy Awards". The *New York Daily Times* published an editorial that declared the film and James Stewart's performance to be worthy of Academy Award consideration.[74]

It's a Wonderful Life received five Academy Award nominations.[75]

Award	Result	Nominee / Winner
Best Picture	Nominated	Frank Capra Winner was Samuel Goldwyn – *The Best Years of Our Lives*
Best Director	Nominated	Frank Capra Winner was William Wyler – *The Best Years of Our Lives*
Best Actor	Nominated	James Stewart Winner was Fredric March – *The Best Years of Our Lives*
Best Film Editing	Nominated	William Hornbeck Winner was Daniel Mandell – *The Best Years of Our Lives*
Best Sound Recording	Nominated	John Aalberg Winner was John P. Livadary – *The Jolson Story*
Technical Achievement Award	Won	Russell Shearman and RKO Radio Studio Special Effects Dept. For the development of a new method of simulating falling snow on motion picture sets.

The Best Years of Our Lives, a drama about servicemen attempting to return to their pre-World War II lives, won most of the awards that year, including four of the five for which *It's a Wonderful Life* was nominated. (The award for "Best Sound Recording" was won by *The Jolson Story*.) *The Best Years of Our Lives*, directed by William Wyler, Capra's business partner along with George Stevens in Liberty Films, was also an outstanding commercial success, ultimately becoming the highest-grossing film of the decade, in contrast to the more modest initial box office returns of *It's a Wonderful Life*.[76]

It's a Wonderful Life received a Golden Globe Award for Capra as Best Motion Picture Director. He also won a "CEC Award" from the Cinema Writers Circle in Spain, for *Mejor Película Extranjera* (Best Foreign Film). Jimmy Hawkins won a "Former Child Star Lifetime Achievement Award" from the Young Artist Awards in 1994; the award recognized his role as Tommy Bailey as igniting his career, which lasted until the mid-1960s.[77]

Release

Ownership and copyright issues

Liberty Films was purchased by Paramount Pictures, and remained a subsidiary until 1951. In 1955, M. & A. Alexander purchased the movie. This included key rights to the original television syndication, the original nitrate film elements, the music score, and the film rights to the story on which the film is based, "The Greatest Gift".[N 7] National Telefilm Associates took over the rights to the film soon thereafter.

"What is it you want, Mary? What do you want? You want the Moon? Just say the word and I'll throw a lasso around it and pull it down. Hey That's a pretty good idea. I'll give you the Moon, Mary." [78]

A clerical error at NTA prevented the copyright from being renewed properly in 1974.[80][81] Despite the lapsed copyright, television stations that aired it still had to pay royalties because—though the film's images had entered the public domain—the film's story was still restricted as a derivative work of the published story *The Greatest Gift*, whose copyright Philip Van Doren Stern had renewed in 1971.[82][83][N 8] The film became a perennial holiday favorite in the 1980s, possibly due to its repeated showings each holiday season on hundreds of local television stations. It was mentioned during the deliberations on the Copyright Term Extension Act of 1998.[82][84]

In 1993, Republic Pictures, which was the successor to NTA, relied on the 1990 U.S. Supreme Court ruling in *Stewart v. Abend* (which involved another Stewart film, *Rear Window*) to enforce its claim to the copyright. While the film's copyright had not been renewed, Republic still owned the film rights to "The Greatest Gift"; thus the plaintiffs were able to argue its status as a derivative work of a work still under copyright.[82][85] NBC, since 1996, is licensed to show the film on U.S. network television, and traditionally shows it twice during the holidays, with one showing on Christmas Eve. Paramount (via parent company Viacom's 1998 acquisition of Republic's then-parent, Spelling Entertainment) once again has distribution rights for the first time since 1955.[82][86]

Due to all the above actions, this is one of the few RKO films not controlled by Turner Entertainment/Warner Bros. in the US. It is also one of two Capra films Paramount owns despite not having originally released it—the other is *Broadway Bill* (originally from Columbia, remade by Paramount as *Riding High* in 1950).[82]

Colorization

Director Capra met with Wilson Markle about having Colorization Inc. colorize *It's a Wonderful Life* based on an enthusiastic response to the colorization of *Topper* from actor Cary Grant.[87] The company's art director, Brian Holmes, prepared 10 minutes of colorized footage from *It's a Wonderful Life* for Capra to view, which resulted in Capra signing a contract with Colorization Inc., and his "enthusiastic agree[ment] to pay half the $260,000 cost of colorizing the movie and to share any profits" and giving "preliminary approval to making similar color versions of two of his other black-and-white films, *Meet John Doe* (1941) and *Lady for a Day* (1933)".[87]

However, the film was believed to be in the public domain at the time, and as a result, Markle and Holmes responded by returning Capra's initial investment, eliminating his financial participation, and refusing outright to allow the director to exercise artistic control over the colorization of his films, leading Capra to join in the campaign against the process.[87]

Three colorized versions have been produced. The first was released by Hal Roach Studios in 1986. The second was authorized and produced by the film's permanent owner, Republic Pictures, in 1989. Both Capra and Stewart took a critical stand on the colorized editions.[88] The Hal Roach color version was re-released in 1989 to VHS via Video Treasures. A third, computer-colorized version was produced by Legend Films in 2007 and has been released on DVD, Blu-ray, and streaming services.

Home release

VHS

Throughout the 1980s and early 1990s, when the film was still under public domain status, *It's A Wonderful Life* was released on VHS by a variety of home video companies. Among the companies that released the film on home video before Republic Pictures stepped in were Meda Video (which would later become Media Home Entertainment), Kartes Video Communications (under its Video Film Classics label), GoodTimes Home Video and Video Treasures (now Anchor Bay Entertainment). After Republic reclaimed the rights to the film, all unofficial VHS copies of the film in print were destroyed.[85] Artisan Entertainment (under license from Republic) took over home video rights in the mid-1990s. Artisan was later sold to Lions Gate Entertainment, which continued to hold US home video rights until late 2005 when they reverted to Paramount, who also owns video rights throughout Region 4 (Latin America and Australia) and in France. Video rights in the rest of the world are held by different companies; for example, the UK rights are with Universal Studios.

Technological first: CD-ROM

In 1993, due in part to the confusion of the ownership and copyright issues, Kinesoft Development, with the support of Republic Pictures, released *It's a Wonderful Life* as one of the first commercial feature-length films on CD-ROM for the Windows PC (Windows 3.1). Predating commercial DVDs by several years, it included such features as the ability to follow along with the complete shooting script as the film was playing.[89][90][N 9]

Given the state of video playback on the PC at the time of its release, *It's a Wonderful Life* for Windows represented another first, as the longest running video on a computer. Prior to its release, Windows could only play back approx. 32,000 frames of video, or about 35 minutes at 15 frames per second. Working with Microsoft, Kinesoft was able to enhance the video features of Windows to allow for the complete playback of the entire film — all of this on a PC with a 486SX processor and only 8 MB of RAM.[91]

Computer Gaming World said in April 1994 that, "The picture quality still has a way to go before it reaches television standards", but was "a noble effort" that would "please fans of the film".[92]

DVD and Blu-ray

The film has seen multiple DVD releases since the availability of the format. In the autumn of 2001, Republic issued the movie twice, once in August, and again with different packaging in September of that same year. On October 31, 2006, Paramount released a newly remastered "60th Anniversary Edition". On November 13, 2007, Paramount released a two-disc "special edition" DVD of the film that contained both the original theatrical black-and-white version, and a new, third colorized version, produced by Legend Films using the latest colorization technology. On November 3, 2009, Paramount re-released the previous DVD set as a "Collector's Edition" and debuted a Blu-ray edition, also containing both versions of the film.

Restoration

In 2017, the film was restored in 4K resolution, available via streaming services and DCP.[93]

Adaptations in other media

The film was twice adapted for radio in 1947, first on *Lux Radio Theater* (March 10) and then on *The Screen Guild Theater* (December 29), then again on the *Screen Guild Theater* broadcast of March 15, 1951. James Stewart and Donna Reed reprised their roles for all three radio productions. Stewart also starred in the May 8, 1949 radio adaptation presented on the *Screen Directors Playhouse*.

A musical stage adaptation of the film, titled *A Wonderful Life*, was written by Sheldon Harnick and Joe Raposo. This version was first performed at the University of Michigan in 1986, but a planned professional production was stalled by legal wrangling with the estate of Philip Van Doren Stern. It was eventually performed in Washington, D.C., by Arena Stage in 1991, and had revivals in the 21st century, including a staged concert version in New York City in 2005 and several productions by regional theatres.

Another musical stage adaptation of the film, titled *It's a Wonderful Life – The Musical*, was written by Bruce Greer and Keith Ferguson. This version premiered at the Majestic Theatre, Dallas, Texas, in 1998. It was an annual Christmas show at the theatre for five years. It has since been performed at venues all around the United States.[94]

In 1992 the final episode of *Tiny Toon Adventures* parodied *It's A Wonderful Life* entitled "It's A Wonderful Tiny Toon Christmas". In it Buster Bunny feels sad after the failure of his play and wishes he had never become a Tiny Toon, so a Guardian angel shows Buster what life would have been like without him.

The film was also adapted into a play in two acts by James W. Rodgers. It was first performed on December 15, 1993 at Paul Laurence Dunbar High School. The play opens with George Bailey contemplating suicide and then goes back through major moments in his life. Many of the scenes from the movie are only alluded to or mentioned in the play rather than actually dramatized. For example, in the opening scene Clarence just mentions George having saved his brother Harry after the latter had fallen through the ice.[95]

It's a Wonderful Life: A Live Radio Play, a stage adaptation presented as a 1940s radio show, was adapted by Joe Landry and has been produced around the United States since 1997. The script is published by Playscripts, Inc.

In 1997, PBS aired *Merry Christmas, George Bailey*, taped from a live performance of the 1947 *Lux Radio Theatre* script at the Pasadena Playhouse. The presentation, which benefited the Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation, featured an all-star cast, including Bill Pullman as George, Nathan Lane as Clarence, Martin Landau as Mr. Potter, Penelope Ann Miller as Mary, and Sally Field as Mother Bailey.[96]

Philip Grecian's 2006 radio play based on the film *It's a Wonderful Life* is a faithful adaptation, now in its third incarnation, that has been performed numerous times by local theatres in Canada.[97]

The Last Temptation of Clarence Odbody is a novel written by John Pierson. The novel imagines the future lives of various characters if George had not survived his jump into the river.[98]

Scenes from the film are seen in the documentary *Abacus: Small Enough to Jail*, where Abacus Federal Savings Bank founder and chairman Thomas Sung talked about how *It's a Wonderful Life* influenced him.

Remakes

- *It Happened One Christmas*

The film was remade as the 1977 television movie *It Happened One Christmas*. Lionel Chetwynd based the screenplay on the original Van Doren Stern short story and the 1946 screenplay. This remake employed gender-reversal, with Marlo Thomas as the protagonist Mary Bailey, Wayne Rogers as George Hatch, and Cloris Leachman as the angel Clara Oddbody.[N 10] Leachman received her second Emmy nomination for this role. In a significant departure from his earlier roles, Orson Welles was cast as Mr. Potter.[N 11] Following initial positive reviews, the made-for-television film was rebroadcast twice in 1978 and 1979, but has not been shown since on national re-broadcasts, nor issued in home media.[N 12][99]

- *The Christmas Spirit* was a retelling of the movie starring Nicollette Sheridan as Charlotte Hart. This was a made-for-TV film aired in December 1, 2013 on the Hallmark Channel executive produced by Sheridan under her company, Wyke Lane Productions, and Brad Krevoy Television. The film was directed and written by Jack Angelo. *Spirit* was set in the present day, with the Hart character working to save a "quiet New England town from a ruthless real estate developer". The film was planned to kick off a film series centered around the Hart character.[100] The film had 3.372 million viewers overall.[101]

Sequel

In 1990, another made-for-television film called *Clarence* starred Robert Carradine in a new tale of the helpful angel.[102][103]

Potential

A purported sequel was in development for a 2015 release, and was to be called *It's a Wonderful Life: The Rest of the Story*. It was to be written by Bob Farnsworth and Martha Bolton and follow the angel of George Bailey's daughter Zuzu (played once again by Karolyn Grimes), as she teaches Bailey's evil grandson how different the world would have been if he had never been born. Producers were considering directors and hoped to shoot the film with a $25–$35 million budget in Louisiana early in 2014.[104]

Karolyn Grimes as Zuzu Bailey

The film had been announced as being produced by Star Partners and Hummingbird Productions, neither of which are affiliated with Paramount, owners of the original film (Farnsworth claimed that *It's a Wonderful Life* was in the public domain). Later, a Paramount spokesperson claimed that they were not granting permission to make the film, "To date, these individuals have not obtained any of the necessary rights, and we would take all appropriate steps to protect those rights", the spokesperson said.[105] No further developmental plans have since arisen.

Urban legend

It is commonly believed that the characters of Bert and Ernie on *Sesame Street* were named after Bert the cop and Ernie the cabdriver; however, in a correction for the 1999 "Annual Xmas Quiz" in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, which made this claim, series writer Jerry Juhl confirmed that, as per producer Jon Stone, the shared names were merely a coincidence.[106] Despite this, the 1996 holiday special *Elmo Saves Christmas* references the rumor, during a scene where Bert and Ernie walk by a TV set, which is playing the movie. The pair are surprised by the line: "Bert! Ernie! What's the matter with you two guys? You were here on my wedding night!"

See also

- Alternate universe in filmdom
- Buffalo Gals, George and Mary liked to sing
- *Dastar Corp. v. Twentieth Century Fox Film Corp.* (a legal case partially relating to another example of an out of copyright adaption of a work still under copyright)
- *I Love You, Alice B. Toklas* a 1968 film
- List of films considered the best
- List of films featuring the deaf and hard of hearing
- *Mr. Destiny* a 1990 film
- *The Family Man* a 2000 film
- Zu Zu Ginger Snaps

References

1. The original budget had been set at $3 million.[2]
2. It was not a true "Christmas card", but rather a 24-page pamphlet.[14]
3. The project went through many hands, including Howard Hughes', who reportedly was interested.[18]
4. Capra claimed the script was purchased for $50,000.[20]
5. Photographs of parts of the RKO set can be seen on retroweb.com.[45]
6. "Mugging Main Street" was reprinted in *Farber on Film*, Library of America, 2009, pp. 307–309.
7. Capra's re-editing of the original score by Dimitri Tomkin was restored to the Tomkin version by Willard Carroll in the 1980s and released on a CD in 1988.[79]
8. The United States copyright of "The Greatest Gift" will expire in 2038, 95 years after its publication.
9. Voyager Company's *Hard Day's Night*, released in May 1993, slightly predated the Kinesoft product. It was originally advertised as an Audio CD.

10. Note the spelling difference for "Oddbody".
11. Welles signed on for projects like this in the 1970s so he could fund his own projects, including *F for Fake*, the unfinished *The Other Side of the Wind*, and his documentary *Filming Othello*.[99]
12. Local televisions stations do occasionally replay the movie.

Citations

1. "*It's a Wonderful Life* (1947)" (https://www.bfi.org.uk/films-tv-people/4ce2b72fd693f). British Film Institute. Retrieved December 7, 2018.
2. Cox 2003, p. 27.
3. Willian 2006, p. 4.
4. "AFI's 100 Years ... 100 Movies 10th Anniversary Edition" (http://www.afi.com/100years/movies10.aspx). American Film Institute. Retrieved July 15, 2012.
5. "It's a Wonderful Life" (http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/298037/Its-a-Wonderful-Life). Encyclopædia Britannica. Retrieved July 15, 2012.
6. Eliot 2006, p. 206.
7. "AFI's 100 Years ... 100 Cheers" (http://www.afi.com/100years/cheers.aspx) American Film Institute Retrieved July 15, 2012.
8. Appearance at University of Chicago Law School Films, 1978.
9. Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis Community Development Project. "Consumer Price Index (estimate) 1800–" (https://www.minneapolisfed.org/community/financial-and-economic-education/cpi-calculator-information/consumer-price-index-1800). Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis. Retrieved January 2, 2019.
10. Sarris, 1998. p. 356
11. Dr. Jeanine Roose << Missouri Cherry Blossom Festival (http://www.cherryblossomfest.com/WordPress/?p=1958) Retrieved April 23, 2017.
12. "It's a Wonderful Life (1946)" (https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0038650/fullcredits). *IMDb.com*. Retrieved November 22, 2017.
13. Ervin, Kathleen A. "Some Kind of Wonderful" (http://www.failuremag.com/arch_arts_its_a_wonderful_life.html) Archived (https://web.archive.org/web/20090207164140/http://www.failuremag.com/arch_arts_its_a_wonderful_life.html) February 7, 2009, at the Wayback Machine. *Failure Magazine* (n.d.). Retrieved: June 2, 2007.
14. Cox 2003, pp. 29–31.
15. Heyboer, Kelly (December 24, 2017). "The surprising Jersey roots of 'It's a Wonderful Life' " (http://www.nj.com/education/2017/12/the_surprising_jersey_roots_of_its_a_wonderful_lif.html) *NJ.com*. Retrieved December 25, 2017.
16. "Tempest in Hollywood". *The New York Times*, April 23, 1944, p. X3.
17. John A. Noakes (1998). "Bankers and Common Men in Bedford Falls: How the FBI Determined That "It's a Wonderful Life" Was a Subversive Movie". *Film History*. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press **10** (3): 311–319. JSTOR 3815225 (https://www.jstor.org/stable/3815225). Also in "Bankers and common men in Bedford Falls". *Film History, Volume 10* (https://books.google.com/?id=LXlRAQAAIAAJ). Taylor & Francis. 1998. p. q=%22having+lost+an+election+for+governor,+George+finds+himself+on+a+bridge+in+his+hometown+contemplating+suicide+and+wishing+that+he+had+gone+into+business+instead+of+politics+His+guardian+angel+saves+him+and+shows+how+different+the+world%22 315 (https://books.google.com/?id=LXlRAQAAIAAJ)
18. Weems, Eric. *Frank Capra online* (http://www.eeweems.com/capra/_wonderful_life.html) Archived (https://web.archive.org/web/20130119035038/http://www.eeweems.com/capra/_wonderful_life.html) January 19, 2013, at the Wayback Machine. Retrieved: June 2, 2007.
19. Cox 2003, p. 26.
20. Capra 1971, p. 376.
21. Pogue, Leland. "Frank Capra: Interviews." Univ. Press of Mississippi, 2004
22. Cox 2003, p. 23.
23. McBride, Joseph. "Frank Capra: The Catastrophe of Success." Univ. Press of Mississippi. 2011
24. McBride, Joseph. "Frank Capra: The Catastrophe of Success." Univ. Press of Mississippi. 2011
25. Goodrich et al. 1986, pp. 135, 200.

26. McDonald, Joan Barone. "Seneca Falls: It's a 'Wonderful' town" (http://www.buffalonews.com/lifearts/travel/story/495003.html). *The Buffalo News*, November 16, 2008. Retrieved: December 29, 2008.
27. Pacheco, Manny. "It's a Wonderful Life Museum opens" (http://www.redroom.com/blog/raideoman1/its-a-wonderful-life-museum-opens) Archived (https://web.archive.org/web/20110122002735/http://www.redroom.com/blog/raideoman1/its-a-wonderful-life-museum-opens) January 22, 2011, at the Wayback Machine. *redroom.com*, December 11, 2010. Retrieved: December 23, 2010.
28. Gammage, Jeff. "For Seneca Falls, It's Hollywood or Bust." *Philadelphia Inquirer*. 27 Sep 1998: A.3.
29. Heyboer, Kelly (December 24, 2017). "It's New Jersey's wonderful story". *The Star-Ledger*.
30. Willian 2006, p. 10.
31. Capra, Frank. "The Name Above the Title." McMillan, 1973. p. 376-7)
32. Greene, Liz. "'"One of America's Favorite Christmas Movies Has a Wonderful Life of Its Own: 72 Percent of Viewers are Younger Than the Movie"' " (https://web.archive.org/web/20081207225334/http://blockbustermediaroom.com/index.php?s=press_releases&item=382) Archived from the original on December 7, 2008 Retrieved December 17, 2006. *Blockbuster Inc*. Retrieved: August 2, 2011.
33. Cox 2003, p. 6.
34. Willian 2006, p. 12.
35. Willian 2006, p. 16.
36. Willian 2006, p. 14.
37. Cox 2003, p. 24.
38. Sarris, 1998. p. 355
39. "RetroWeb Image Gallery | Bison Archives RKO Ranch photograph collection" (http://www.retroweb.com/gallery/index.php?album=Studio%20Backlots/RKO%20Encino%20Ranch/Bison%20Archives) Retroweb.com. Retrieved December 20, 2012.
40. "The RetroWeb Image Gallery" (http://www.retroweb.com/gallery/index.php?album=Studio+Backlots/RKO+Encino+Ranch/Bison+Archives/Modern+Street) *Retroweb.com*. Retrieved November 22, 2017.
41. "RetroWeb Image Gallery | It's A Wonderful Life" (http://www.retroweb.com/gallery/index.php?album=Studio%20Backlots/RKO%20Encino%20Ranch/It%27s%20A%20Wonderful%20Life) *Retroweb.com*. Retrieved December 20, 2012.
42. Hickman, Matt (December 14, 2011). "6 things you probably didn't know about 'It's a Wonderful Life'" (http://www.mnn.com/lifestyle/arts-culture/stories/6-things-you-probably-didnt-know-about-its-a-wonderful-life) mnn.com. Retrieved November 24, 2013.
43. Liszewski, Andrew. "Hollywood Invented a New Type Of Fake Snow To Film It's a Wonderful Life" (https://gizmodo.com/5870771/hollywood-invented-a-new-type-of-fake-snow-to-film-its-a-wonderful-life) *Gizmodo.com*. Retrieved November 22, 2017.
44. Wayne, Gary. "Hollywood on Location: the '40s" (http://www.seeing-stars.com/Locations/40sLocations.shtml) Archived (https://web.archive.org/web/20160124034039/http://www.seeing-stars.com/Locations/40sLocations.shtml) January 24, 2016, at the Wayback Machine. *seeing-stars.com*. Retrieved: August 25, 2009.
45. "Residential Sets" (http://www.retroweb.com/rko_encino_residential_sets.html). *retroweb.com*. Retrieved: December 29. 2011.
46. Willian 2006, p. 5.
47. Willian 2006, p. 15.
48. Noland, Claire (May 5, 2008). "Child actor played early George Bailey" (http://articles.latimes.com/2008/jun/08/local/me-anderson8). Retrieved July 21, 2018.
49. Cox 2003, p. 15.
50. Cahill 2006, p. 105.
51. Dirks. Tim. "Review" (http://www.filmsite.org/itsa2.html) *filmsite.org*. Retrieved: August 25, 2009.
52. Jones, Robert L. "It Was A Wonderful Life" (http://www.objectivistcenter.org/ct-1833-wonderful_life.aspx) Archived (https://web.archive.org/web/20070505205443/http://www.objectivistcenter.org/ct-1833-wonderful_life.aspx) 5 May 2007 at the Wayback Machine *objectivistcenter.org*. Retrieved: August 25, 2009.

53. McBride, Joseph (2011) [1992 (https://books.google.com/?id=Ia1aAAAAMAAJ)]. *Frank Capra. The Catastrophe of Success* (https://books.google.com/?id=DMkLpTFBEtUC&printsec=frontcover). Jackson, Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi. p. 528 (https://books.google.com/?id=DMkLpTFBEtUC&pg=PA528). ISBN 1-60473839-1. ISBN 978-1-604-73839-1.
54. Srampickal, Jacob; Mazza, Giuseppe; Baugh, Lloyd, eds. (2006). *Cross Connections* (https://books.google.com/?id=iKzmh4Iqi9cC&printsec=frontcover). Rome: Gregorian Biblical BookShop. p. 199 (https://books.google.com/?id=iKzmh4Iqi9cC&pg=PA199&q=%22A+spate+of+movies+appeared+just+after+the+ending+of+the+Second+World+War,+including+It's+a+Wonderful+Life+(1946)+and+Stairway+to+Heaven+(1946),+perhaps+tapping+into+so+many+people's+experience+of+loss+of+loved+ones+and+offering+a+kind+of+consolation%22). ISBN 9788878390614.
55. Capra 1971, pp. 372–373.
56. "New Picture" (http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,793342-1,00.html). *Time*, December 23, 1946. Retrieved: June 8, 2007.
57. Crowther, Bosley. "'It's a Wonderful Life', Screen in Review" (http://movies2.nytimes.com/mem/movies/review.html?title1=&title2=It%27s%20a%20Wonderful%20Life&reviewer=BOSLEY%20CROWTHER&v_id=25590&pdate=19461223&partner=Rotten%20Tomatoes). Archived (https://web.archive.org/web/20150904064533/http://movies2.nytimes.com/mem/movies/review.html?title1=&title2=It%27s%20a%20Wonderful%20Life&reviewer=BOSLEY%20CROWTHER&v_id=25590&pdate=19461223&partner=Rotten%20Tomatoes) September 4, 2015, at the Wayback Machine. *The New York Times*, December 23, 1946. Retrieved: June 8, 2007.
58. *American Film Institute Catalog of Motion Pictures* (online database).
59. Richard Jewell & Vernon Harbin, *The RKO Story*. New Rochelle, New York: Arlington House, 1982. p215
60. Chen, Will (December 24, 2006). "FBI Considered "It's A Wonderful Life" Communist Propaganda" (http://www.wisebread.com/fbi-considered-its-a-wonderful-life-communist-propaganda). Retrieved March 2, 2012.
Goodtimes, Johnny (December 20, 2011). "'It's a Wonderful Life" Is Communist Propaganda" (http://blogs.phillymag.com/the_philly_post/2011/12/20/its-wonderful-life-communist-propaganda/). Retrieved March 2, 2012.
Eschner, Kat (December 20, 2017). "The Weird Story of the FBI and 'It's a Wonderful Life'" (https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/weird-story-fbi-and-its-wonderful-life-180967587/). Retrieved December 20, 2017.
61. "Complete National Film Registry Listing" (https://www.loc.gov/programs/national-film-preservation-board/film-registry/complete-national-film-registry-listing/). *The Library of Congress*. Retrieved December 25, 2017.
62. "100 Greatest Films of All Time" (http://www.filmsite.org/filmfour.html). *www.filmsite.org*. Retrieved December 25, 2017.
63. "AFI Crowns Top 10 Films in 10 Classic Genres" (http://www.comingsoon.net/news/movienews.php?id=46072). *American Film Institute* via *ComingSoon.net*, June 17, 2008. Retrieved: June 18, 2008.
64. "Top 10 Fantasy" (http://www.afi.com/10top10/fantasy.html). *American Film Institute*. Retrieved: June 18, 2008.
65. Farber, Manny. "Mugging Main Street". *The New Republic*, January 6, 1947.
66. Jamieson, Wendell. "Wonderful? Sorry, George, It's a Pitiful, Dreadful Life" (https://www.nytimes.com/2008/12/19/movies/19wond.html). *The New York Times*, December 18, 2008. Retrieved: December 20, 2008.
67. Cohen, Richard. "It's a Wonderful Life": The most terrifying movie ever" (http://www.salon.com/2010/12/25/its_wonderful_life_terrifying_movie_ever/). *Salon.com*, December 24, 2010. Retrieved: January 7, 2011.
68. Kamiya, Gary. "All hail Pottersville!" (http://www.salon.com/2001/12/22/pottersville/). *Salon.com*, December 22, 2001. Retrieved: January 7, 2011.
69. "It's a Wonderful Life" (https://www.nbc.com/its-a-wonderful-life). *NBC.com*. December 24, 2014. Retrieved October 25, 2018.
70. Cox 2003, p. 11.
71. "Votes for *It's a Wonderful Life* (1947)" (https://www.bfi.org.uk/films-tv-people/4ce2b72fd693f/sightandsoundpoll2012). *Sight & Sound*. British Film Institute. Retrieved November 24, 2018.
72. "*It's a Wonderful Life* (1946)" (https://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/its_a_wonderful_life/). *Rotten Tomatoes*. Fandango. Retrieved October 25, 2018.
73. "*It's a Wonderful Life* Reviews" (https://www.metacritic.com/movie/its-a-wonderful-life). *Metacritic*. CBS Interactive. Retrieved October 25, 2018.
74. Wiley and Bona 1987, p. 163.
75. "The 19th Academy Awards (1947) Nominees and Winners" (http://www.oscars.org/awards/academyawards/legacy/ceremony/19th-winners.html). *oscars.org*. Retrieved: August 17, 2011.

76. Finler 1988, p. 177.
77. Flick, A. J. "So Long, Jimmy" (http://www.classicmovies.org/articles/aa072797.htm). *classicmovies.org*. Retrieved: August 17, 2011.
78. Goodreads. Retrieved 15 June 2018. https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/212575-what-is-it-you-want-mary-what-do-you-want
79. Cox 2003, pp. 12–14.
80. Cox 2003, p. 113.
81. U.S. Copyright Office, *Catalog of Copyright Entries*, New Series, Renewals sections in the 1973–1974 volumes.
82. Cox 2003, p. 115.
83. "Renewal Registrations, p. 1614" (http://shelf1.library.cmu.edu/Projects/crr/1971/1971-1-1614.tif). *Catalog of Copyright Entries, January–June 1971, U.S. Copyright Office*. Retrieved: November 8, 2010.
84. *The Copyright Term Extension Act of 1995: Hearing Before the Committee on the Judiciary, United States Senate, One Hundred Fourth Congress, first session, on S. 483 ... September 20, 1995*. By United States. Congress. Senate. Committee on the Judiciary. United States. Published by U.S. G.P.O., 1997, pp. 16, 73, 126. ISBN 978-0-16-054351-7.
85. "Notes for 'It's a Wonderful Life'" (http://www.tcm.com/tcmdb/title/79566/It-s-a-Wonderful-Life/notes.html) Retrieved October 29, 2011. *TCM Movie Database*, 2010. Retrieved: November 8, 2010.
86. Alsdorf, Matt. Slate.com: "Why *Wonderful Life* Comes but Once a Year" (http://www.slate.com/id/1004242/) *slate.com*, December 21, 1999. Retrieved: September 10, 2009.
87. Edgerton, Gary R. (Winter 2000). "'The Germans Wore Gray, You Wore Blue": Frank Capra, Casablanca, and the Colorization Controversy of the 1980s". *Journal of Popular Film and Television*. **27** (4): 24–32. doi:10.1080/01956050009602812(https://doi.org/10.1080%2F01956050009602812) | `access-date=` requires `|url=` (help)
88. Ebert, Roger. "It's a Wonderful Life" (http://rogerebert.suntimes.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/19990101/REVIEWS08/401010376/1023) *Chicago Sun-Times*, January 1, 1999. Retrieved: February 24, 2008.
89. Burr, Ty. "ABC'S OF CD: Delivering the Future" (https://web.archive.org/web/20090425210741/http://www.ew.com/ew/article/0,,308919,00.html) *ew.com* via *Entertainment Weekly*, 2009. Retrieved: May 29, 2009.
90. "Taking A Peek" (http://www.cgwmuseum.org/galleries/index.php?year=1994&pub=2&id=116) *Computer Gaming World*. March 1994. pp. 174–180.
91. Edwards, James. "Peter Sills: Developer BIO" (http://www.mobygames.com/developer/sheet/view/developerId,42076/). *mobygames.com*, 2009. Retrieved: May 29, 2009.
92. "Invasion Of The Data Stashers" (http://www.cgwmuseum.org/galleries/index.php?year=1994&pub=2&id=117) *Computer Gaming World* April 1994. pp. 20–42.
93. "Restored Christmas Classics" (https://www.parkcircus.com/latest/P2010-Restored%20Christmas%20Classics) Park Circus.
94. "It's a Wonderful Life – The Musical" (https://web.archive.org/web/20110811094826/http://www.iawlmusical.com/this_version.html). Archived from the original (http://iawlmusical.com/this_version.html) on August 11, 2011. Retrieved August 17, 2012
95. Rodgers 1994, p. i.
96. "Merry Christmas, George Bailey reviews" (http://blainebaggett.wordpress.com/performance/merry-christmas-george-bailey/merry-christmas-george-bailey-reviews/) *Blainebaggett.wordpress.com* July 28, 2013. Retrieved November 22, 2017.
97. Jang, Howard. "Introducing ... 'It's a Wonderful Life'" (http://blog.artsclub.com/2009/10/23/introducing-its-a-wonderful-life/) Archived (https://web.archive.org/web/20160219174101/http://blog.artsclub.com/2009/10/23/introducing-its-a-wonderful-life/) February 19, 2016, at the Wayback Machine. *artsclub.com*, October 23, 2009. Retrieved: December 20, 2009.
98. *The Last Temptation of Clarence Odbody* (https://www.amazon.com/The-Last-Temptation-Clarence-Odbody/dp/098156433X) amazon.com, Retrieved: May 6, 2012.
99. Webb, Chad. "Missing: It Happened One Christmas" (http://www.411mania.com/movies/columns/167119/Nether-Regions-12.21.10:-It-Happened-One-Christmas.htm) *411mania.com*, 2010. Retrieved: August 2, 2011.

100. Block, Alex Ben (July 19, 2013). "Hallmark Channel Preps 4 New Christmas Movies" (https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/hallmark-channel-preps-christmas-movies-586098) *The Hollywood Reporter*. Retrieved January 31, 2018.
101. "Sunday's Cable Ratings & Broadcast Finals: NFL, "Walking Dead" Top Charts" (http://www.thefutoncritic.com/ratings/2013/12/04/sundays-cable-ratings-and-broadcast-finals-nfl-walking-dead-top-charts-147110/cable_20131201/) *The Futon Critic*. December 4, 2013. Retrieved December 4, 2017.
102. Price, Michael H. " 'Life' gets even more wonderful two generations later" (https://news.google.com/newspapers?id=9YofAAAAIBAJ&sjid=ONMEAAAAIBAJ&pg=1147,2723543). *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, December 14, 1991. Retrieved: July 31, 2011.
103. Sharbutt, Jay. "Angel of 1946 film comes to cable: 'Clarence' gives modern twist to 'It's a Wonderful Life' theme" (https://news.google.com/newspapers?id=9vtNAAAAIBAJ&sjid=g4sDAAAAIBAJ&pg=4870,2414005) *The Free Lance-Star*, December 11, 1990. Retrieved: July 31, 2011.
104. "Sequel to Frank Capra's 'It's a Wonderful Life' Aiming for 2015 Release [UPDATED] – /Film" (http://www.slashfilm.com/sequel-to-frank-capras-its-a-wonderful-life-aiming-for-2014-release/) *Slashfilm.com*. November 18, 2013. Retrieved November 22, 2017.
105. "Paramount Threatens Legal Action Over 'It's a Wonderful Life' Sequel Plan" (http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/a-wonderful-life-sequel-paramount-658508) *The Hollywood Reporter*. Retrieved November 22, 2017.
106. Carroll, Jon. "A Few Tiny Errors". The San Francisco Chronicle January 3, 2000

Bibliography

- Barker, Martin and Thomas Austin. "Films, Audiences and Analyses". *From Antz To Titanic: Reinventing Film Analysis*. London: Pluto Press, 2000, pp. 15–29. ISBN 0-7453-1584-4.
- Cahill, Marie. *It's a Wonderful Life*. East Bridgewater, Massachusetts: World Publications Group, 2006. ISBN 978-1-57215-459-9.
- Capra, Frank. *Frank Capra, The Name Above the Title: An Autobiography*. New York: The Macmillan Company 1971. ISBN 0-306-80771-8.
- Cox, Stephen. *It's a Wonderful Life: A Memory Book*. Nashville, Tennessee: Cumberland House, 2003. ISBN 1-58182-337-1.
- Eliot, Mark. *Jimmy Stewart: A Biography*. New York: Random House, 2006. ISBN 1-4000-5221-1.
- Finler, Joel W. *The Hollywood Story: Everything You Always Wanted to Know About the American Movie Business, But Didn't Know Where to Look*. London: Pyramid Books, 1988. ISBN 1-85510-009-6.
- Goodrich, Francis, Albert Hackett and Frank Capra. *It's a Wonderful Life: The Complete Script in its Original Form* New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986. ISBN 0-312-43911-3.
- Jones, Ken D., Arthur F. McClure and Alfred E. Twomey. *The Films of James Stewart* New York: Castle Books, 1970.
- McBride, Joseph. *Frank Capra: The Catastrophe of Success*. New York: Touchstone Books, 1992. ISBN 0-671-79788-3.
- Michael, Paul, ed. *The Great Movie Book: A Comprehensive Illustrated Reference Guide to the Best-loved Films of the Sound Era*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1980. ISBN 0-13-363663-1.
- Rodgers, James W. *It's a Wonderful Life: A Play in Two Acts*. Woodstock, Illinois: Dramatic Publishing, 1994. ISBN 0-87129-432-X.
- Sarris, Andrew. 1998. *"You Ain't Heard Nothin' Yet." The American Talking Film History & Memory 1927-1949*. Oxford University Press. ISBN 0-19-513426-5
- Walters, James. "Reclaiming the Real: It's a Wonderful Life (Frank Capra, 1946)". *Alternative Worlds in Hollywood Cinema*. Bristol UK: Intellect Ltd, 2008, pp. 115–134. ISBN 978-1-84150-202-1.
- Wiley, Mason and Damien Bona. *Inside Oscar: The Unofficial History of the Academy Awards*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1987. ISBN 0-345-34453-7.
- Willian, Michael. *The Essential It's a Wonderful Life: A Scene-by-Scene Guide to the Classic Film, 2nd ed*. Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2006. ISBN 978-1-55652-636-7.

Further reading

- Stewart, Jimmy. "Jimmy Stewart Remembers 'It's a Wonderful Life'". 1977. MyMerryChristmas.com, 2012. Web. January 9, 2012.
- Cox, Stephen. "On a Wing and a Prayer". *Los Angeles Times* December 23, 2006: E-1. Web. January 9, 2012.
- Sullivan, Daniel J. "Sentimental Hogwash?: On Capra's *It's a Wonderful Life*", *Humanitas* (2005) 18.1–2: 115–140. Web. January 9, 2012.
- Kamiya, Gary. "All hail Pottersville!" *Salon* December 22, 2001. Web. January 9, 2012.
- Daven Hiskey (December 23, 2011). "It's a Wonderful Life was Based on a "Christmas Card" Short Story by Philip Van Doren Stern". *TodayIFoundOut.com*.

External links

- Official website
- *It's a Wonderful Life* on IMDb
- *It's a Wonderful Life* at AllMovie
- *It's a Wonderful Life* at the TCM Movie Database
- The Making of *It's A Wonderful Life* Frank Capra Online at Eeweems.com
- Dimitri Tiomkin and *It's A Wonderful Life* at AmericanMusicPreservation.com
- Philip Van Doren Stern, *The Greatest Gift*, publicly available 1st edition of authenticated reproduction, at sendaframe.com
- *It's A Wonderful Life 2016 CC* is available for free download at the Internet Archive

Streaming audio

- *It's a Wonderful Life* on *Lux Radio Theater*: March 10, 1947
- *It's a Wonderful Life* on *Screen Directors Playhouse* May 8, 1949

Retrieved from "https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=It%27s_a_Wonderful_Life&oldid=889103749"

This page was last edited on 23 March 2019, at 14:11 (UTC).

Text is available under the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike License; additional terms may apply. By using this site, you agree to the Terms of Use and Privacy Policy. Wikipedia® is a registered trademark of the Wikimedia Foundation, Inc., a non-profit organization.